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kind, who has thought proper, I will not say, to invert the whole course of nature, but at least to stop its progress, to keep the birds from flying, and even prevent the blowing of the winds:

"Thus she mourn'd, what a scene all around,

The birds flag their wings at her sighs ;  
The vallies her sorrows resound,

And the stream shows her blubbered eyes ;

All nature takes part in her woe,  
A black cloud o'er the heavens is spread,

The winds have forgotten to blow,  
And the willows bend over her head."

What is an Earthquake to this? that the winds should lose their memory and forget to blow; yet such liberties are frequently taken by Poets, but, in my opinion, they are very *unwarrantable*, for nothing can be so cruel as to annihilate the world for the sake of one inhabitant of it. I would allow the Poets to hold conversation with the woods and valleys, and to call the streams or beasts of the field to witness, but to prevent the poor birds from flying, and the winds from blowing, is not to be justified by any of the laws of Parnassus.

It appears too, that the language of lovers, when they speak of heaven and hell, is not always metaphorical, witness the following:

"Nice virtue preach'd religions laws,  
Paths to eternal rest,

To fight his king and country's cause,  
Fame counsel'd him was best,

But love opposed their noisy tongues,  
And thus their votes out-braved :

Get, get, a mistress, fair and young,  
Love fiercely, constantly, and long,  
And then thou shalt be sav'd.

Here is a receipt for eternal salvation; for this song is modestly entitled "the way to be saved," and no doubt there are many who tried the experiment; with what success I cannot at present take time to inquire. This author, however, differs very materially in his religious sentiments from the following:

"Long courtship's the vice of a phlegmatic fool,

Like the grace of fanatical sinners,

Where the stomachs are lost and the vic-  
tuals grow cool,

Before mens sit down to their dinners."

The poet's idea seems to be less unreasonable than any I have mentioned, for he considers his mistress in the same light as he considers a joint smoaking on the table. He rejects courtship because it resembles a long grace before dinner; so whips up his knife and fork, and helps himself like an alderman at a city feast. Indeed the song smacks so strongly of the *kitchen*, that I should almost suspect a member of the cook's company had written it. It was a very great favourite some time back, and the ladies must certainly own their obligations to the author for the delicate comparison he has drawn.

In my next letter, Mr. Editor, I shall probably pursue the subject, and if I find it agreeable to your readers, shall go through a course of lectures on most of our common and fashionable songs, with a view to ascertain the portion each has of poetry and common sense. Mean time, I am, Sir, your very obedient servant.

CURSIVUS.

Belfast, February, 1809.

To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.

SIR,

IN the present situation of this country, from the exorbitant price of Flax, and the probable want of a sufficient quantity of Flax-seed for the ensuing season, every circumstance connected with the linen-manufacture, and the support of those employed in its various branches, is worthy of serious consideration. Should it fail from want of raw material, the spinners must suffer first; but the distress, if not ruin, of others must soon follow. In the counties of Down and Antrim, notwithstanding the extent of their manufacture, the dearth of flax, or of flax-seed, is only a lesser evil, compared with that which must be felt in the other parts of the kingdom. From the fineness of their yarn, a small quantity of flax employs a great number of spinners, and produces a profit, as the price of labour, equally great.

In several districts of these two counties, and a small portion of Armagh, I am induced to think that the yarn averages at 8 or 10 hanks in the pound. In the barony of Ards, I know that many spin yarn of 14, several of 16 to 20, and a few to 22, and upwards. In the village of Greyabby, I have seen all grists, from 22 hanks downwards, in the grocery shop windows, not only in bunches, but in single hanks, as brought in by the poor, to purchase their necessities, or their little luxuries of tea, sugar, tobacco, &c. In spring last, I procured a hank of the grist of 23 hanks in the pound, from a woman there, who had near 40 hanks of the same, spun by her daughter, then in her 15th year; and I was told that, about the village of Millisle, some spin much finer.

From these facts, I presume, we may consider 6 hanks in the pound a very moderate average for the linen-yarn of these two counties: whilst as I am informed, it does not exceed two, in the other counties. Here, then, is a saving of two thirds in the price of seed, rent of land, and labour previous to spinning, besides the additional value of the yarn, and extension of the benefits of industry, from the additional number of spinners, &c. employed.

I am aware that, were all our yarn spun from 6 hanks upwards, the quantity of fine linen produced would far exceed the demand, whilst the coarser, though more necessary, staple would be diminished, and nearly lost. But I am aware, also, that were our flax judiciously prepared, and our spinning improved as it might, nearly as much yarn, and of better quality, would be produced, for the coarser fabrics, by young spinners, and the spinning machinery, now happily introduced into this country, as there is at present; whilst the nicer eye and more delicate finger, improved by habit and attention, would produce four times the quantity that is now spun of a finer staple. Besides, whatever deficiency might arise, in the very coarse fabrics, might, I presume, be supplied cheaper, from hemp, by the machinery already mentioned.

There is another circumstance, of no mean importance, which should not be overlooked. If I am rightly informed, the city of London has been in the habit of sending out £50,000, yearly, for foreign lace, or yarn and thread to be manufactured into lace. If this be true, would not the production of such yarn at home be a great national saving, not to speak of the numbers who would be employed and supported, by preparing the thread, and manufacturing the lace? And does not this present a strong inducement to Government and the legislature, to encourage the genius, animate the industry, and cheer the hearts of the poor lasses of Erin, by enabling her Linen-board to give adequate premiums for the production of yarn, and manufacture of thread, equal to the finest and best imported.

I know, something of this kind was done, a good many years ago, when Ireland had a parliament; and that it was productive of very happy effects. Previous to that period, yarn of 24 hanks in the pound, had never been heard of in the country, and finer than 12 seldom seen. However I would have the claim to premiums to commence with a grist still finer; suppose 30 hanks in the pound, and the premiums to rise in proportion to superior fineness. From what took place on a former occasion, were the experiment made, I have no doubt of its success. Nay I feel warranted in expressing my full conviction that our ingenious, though poor and despised, Irish Girls are capable of outstripping the world in this delicate and valuable manufacture; and I am happy in adding, that the Right Honourable and Honourable the Dublin Society, and the trustees of the Linen-board have in their possession, demonstration of the fact. I am assured that the finest linen-yarn, ever imported, did not exceed 40 or 44 hanks in the pound; whereas one was sent to the Linen-board, some years ago, by the Earl of Londonderry, and another, at a later date, through the Right Hon. John Foster, of at least 64 hanks in the pound. About two years ago, I deposited, in the museum of the Dublin Society, a hank of equal fineness, and one cut of 120

threads, which the spinner, as she declared to me, believed to be, at least, 14 hanks in the pound finer. This rests on her declaration, because it was the first she had spun, of so fine a thread, and the quantity was so small that she had no weights by which she could ascertain its fineness with accuracy.

For the first of the two hanks, presented to the linen-board, she was complimented with ten guineas; for the other with twenty; the only reward she has ever received. However, animated by the honour, more than the value of this well earned premium, she has proceeded in her improvements, almost beyond credibility. At this moment I have in my possession a hank, which I received from her, on the 20th of last month, weighing three sixteenths of an ounce, i.e. of the fineness of  $85\frac{1}{2}$  hanks in the pound; and on the 1st instant, I received 4 cuts, inclosed in a letter, 20 hanks finer.

These facts I would scarcely have dared to mention, I had I not, within my reach, evidence to support them; nor would I have mentioned them, did I not conceive that the knowledge of them may probably be conducive to the public good. It is intended that a specimen of my evidence, shall accompany this sketch. Whether, and how far the expected good may arise from it, must depend on the spirited exertions of our *poor Irish Girls* to imitate the example of Ann M<sup>c</sup>Quillin; the generosity of Irish women, the patronage of the linen-board, supported by parliament, the patriotism, I had almost written, the nationality of Irishmen; and the *blessing of Providence*.

As the facts which I have mentioned, may attract public attention, and excite public curiosity respecting the person, connexions, character, rank and circumstances of Ann M<sup>c</sup>Quillin, I shall take the liberty of subjoining, that—

Ann M<sup>c</sup>Quillin, the Irish spinstress, is a native of Comber, in the Barony of Castlereagh, and County of Down, six miles distant from Belfast. She is near 40 years of age, rather below the middle size, delicate in her constitution, but cheerful and lively in

her manners, though her health and sight are considerably impaired by intense application to the improvement of her art.

She has three sisters, who spin yarn from 24 to 40 hanks in the pound, which she calls coarse yarn.

Her father, Charles M<sup>c</sup>Quillin, of an ancient and respectable family, in the county of Antrim, is an old and infirm man, of excellent character, and who through life, has been a very useful member of society. He was for many years an eminent writing master, and afterwards, when a failure of sight disqualified him for that profession, he obtained an employment in the revenue, worth £30, per annum, which he held for 28 years. He is now superannuated on full pay. He is nearly blind, and totally dependent on this small annuity, and the astonishing industry of his daughters.

The name of her mother, a discreet pleasing woman, and highly respected in her station, was Wilson. She languished for several years, under a slow decline, which terminated her life, a few years ago. During her long indisposition, the exertions of her daughters, added to their father's small annuity, supplied her, not only with the necessities, but humble comforts, of declining life.

To such tender melancholy offices, the young M<sup>c</sup>Quillins were devoted, almost from infancy. Their grandmother Wilson, who died 19 years ago, at the advanced age of 92, had been long an invalid, sinking under the pressure of years and infirmity. During this period, while the industry and cheerful attentions of the young M<sup>c</sup>Quillins soothed and comforted her latter days; her good sense and instructive lessons animated their industry, and laid the foundation of that character, which they still support. Mrs. Wilson was a truly respectable woman, and eminently useful in her generation. I knew her intimately, from the year 1767, nearly till the time of her death. She was the best bred, best informed, *Diva Lucina*, otherwise midwife of the county, in her day, and consequently the most generally employed in all the neighbouring families of rank and

respectability. Gentlemen were not so frequently called in, as grooms of the bedchamber, then as latterly; and when they were, it was only, like Dr. Slop in the family of Mr. Shandy, to amuse themselves in the parlour, with the intricate disputables of religion or politics, while dame Wilson managed things above stairs, in her own way, and generally brought them to an happy issue.

In the treatment of small pox she was aequally eminent. She was among the first in the country, who adopted, recommended, and practised the *Suttonian* system, in which she was of great service to the public.

I hope I shall not be deemed impertinent in adding, that the wheel on which Ann M'Quillin spins her superfine yarn, was made, before the marriage of her grandmother Wilson; and that, on her first removal to her husband's house, in the year 1716, it was one of her accompaniments. 'This the whole family assert, on the grandmother's own authority: and the circumstance appears to me as important, in this sketch, as the immortal Milton's shoe-latchets; Raoli's great dog, or Johnson's large English oak stick, in the sketches of their respective characters.

Perhaps it may not be amiss to mention that Ann cannot spin her superfine yarn, except in mild weather. Frost, high-winds, and excessive drought, are equally unfavourable. She then spins, what she calls coarse yarn: that is, from 24 to 30, or 36 hanks in the pound,

A few years ago, she could spin a hank of 64 in the pound, in four days. Of the finer staple, she can now spin a hank, in the week, when the weather is favourable. But the superfine, i.e. about 100 hanks in the pound, requires nearly twice the time.

Of the manner in which she prepares her flax, I know nothing; but I am certain, the knowledge of it would be highly important to all concerned in the linen business, and to the country at large, as it would enable spinners to produce yarn, not only finer, but in every respect much better, than is usually done. Under this impression I earnestly wish that

the linen drapers, and others conversant in the trade, would take this subject into their serious consideration; and if they deem it of any real importance, that from a regard not only to the circumstances and merits of our unparalleled spinstress, but to the general improvement of our staple manufacture in elegance and value, they would devise, adopt, and execute, some measure, worthy of themselves for rewarding her past exertions, and encouraging her not only to persevere in them, but to publish the means, and process, by which she has brought her flax and yarn to such amazing perfection.

As what I have written may reach the eye of some, who may be incapable of estimating the fineness of Ann's yarn, from their ignorance of its count and measure, I add, that each hank contains 12 cuts, each cut 120 threads, and each thread measures  $2\frac{1}{2}$  yards.

From this table, it is evident that the thread of her yarn, of 64 hanks, from one pound of flax, is in length

	Miles, f. p. yds.			
85 Hanks,	{	102	6	34 2 Irish measure.
		130	7	7 1 English do.
		136	4	34 2 Irish.
		175	6	36 2 English.
and				
105 do. p. lb.	{	168	6	0 0 Irish.
no less than		214	6	7 0 English.

Should you, Gentlemen, from the view, above exhibited, deem what I present you, worthy of a place in your Magazine, I shall take the liberty of troubling you with something further on the subject, at a future day. In the mean time, permit me to request that you may be so good as to inclose a few threads of Ann's *astounding* production, to each of your Subscribers, with this sketch, that they may see it with their own eyes, and judge of it by the light of their own understanding. If you do, I hope—nay, I trust—I am assured,—they will be willing to contribute to a subscription for her benefit of which I doubt not you and your agents in the different towns, would accept of the office of being collectors, as a small acknowledgement of the admiration which it will excite, the pleasure it will inspire, and the

flattering prospect of national honour and interest which it opens. In the Irish ladies I repose, if possible, more than confidence. I know that their honourable pride, and their patriotism, will conspire with their innate generosity in promoting the circumstances, the merits, and the future comfort, of their ingenious and humble, but admirable countrywoman.

To the female nobility and gentry of Ireland, Lady Dufferin has set a noble and praiseworthy example. She has repeatedly purchased yarn, had it manufactured into thread, by Ann herself, and wrought into lace, in the neighbourhood of London. I have in my possession, at this moment, a specimen of the thread manufactured from yarn, of about 70 hanks in the pound, and the lace worked for her Ladyship from it, far superior to any thing of the kind, which ever was seen in this country. Would the other ladies of the land follow her steps in the encouragement of our Irish spinstresses, they would call forth Irish ingenuity, render Irish industry active and comfortable, and, by the splendour of their virtues, add real dignity to their titles.

"Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus."

W. STEEL DICKSON.

*Roan, Armagh, Feb. 15, 1809.*

Through an error of the press, in the foregoing article, Ann M'Quillin is stated to be near 40 years of age.....she is but about 25.

*For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.*

#### NATIONAL SCHOOLS.

THE following Plan, requiring of government the annual grant of a sum not exceeding £120,000, would establish well conducted schools within a mile of every house, provide for the civil and moral instruction not only of all the poor in Ireland, but also of all the middle classes; impress moral and religious principle upon the public mind, without the slightest encroachment upon the particular tenets of any Church, and thereby increase the public confidence, the peace, and the happiness of all.

#### ARRANGEMENTS.

##### I.

That government grant £50, and every parish, at least £12 10 0, to erect four school houses at proper dis-

tances from each other in every parish, for the education of all the children, in English, writing, and Christian duty.

##### II.

That government continue this grant annually, for the education of 40 poor children in every parish, that shall contribute a small annual sum sufficient for repairs, firing, and premiums; and adhere to the underneath Regulations.

##### III.

That each parish shall, at a vestry meeting, choose six intelligent Laymen, resident in the parish, who, with the Established, Dissenting, and Catholic Clergymen, shall constitute the PAROCHIAL COMMITTEE.

##### IV.

That the Parochial committee shall superintend the application of the Government grant, and the parish contribution to the erecting, supporting, and endowing said schools;—shall be empowered to choose the free scholars, and in case of gross misconduct, to expell them; to choose the teachers, and in case of neglect or misconduct, to supersede them;—to hold public examinations, at least once in the year, to adjudge premiums to the most deserving, to publish their names, and record them in the vestry-book;—to superintend the establishment, the funds, repairs and orderly arrangements of the schools, and to make a faithful report hereof to the COUNTY VISITORS.

##### V.

That a visitor of liberal education, and liberal views, be annually appointed to inspect the schools of each county, at a salary proportioned to the number of schools visited. That the visitors for the 12 counties of Leinster be chosen by the Established Clergymen, at their annual visitation, for the 11 Counties of Munster and Connaught, by the Catholic Clergy, at their visitation; and for the nine Counties of Ulster, by the Dissenting Clergy, at the General Synod; that the Visitors be required to visit all the schools annually, to receive the report of the Parochial committees, to see the state of the school-houses, books, accounts, and to apportion the salary to the varying numbers in each school;—to examine the scholars in English, Writing, Accounts and the Christian duties;—to suggest improvements to the Teachers, and make